(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the performance of STC has been continuously declining; and

(d) if so, the concrete steps Government propose to take to boost export performance of STC?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. STC is making vigorous efforts to increase its non-canalised exports by way of enrolling a number of associates to ensure supply sources. With a view to further strengthening the captive supply base, it plans to enter into tie-ups for export production in identified areas.

(c) and (d) Total turnover of STC during 1993-94 of Rs. 1117 crores registered a growth of 10% over its performance at the level of Rs. 1013 crores during 1992-93. Export turnover of Rs. 798 crores of STC during 1993-94 was higher by 45% as compared to its export turnover of Rs. 551 crores in 1992-93. Similarly, non-canalised import turnover also rose by 74% from the level of Rs. 39 crores in 1992-93 to Rs. 68 crores during 1993-94.

Expert Committee by Tobacco Board and Health Ministry

1771. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tobacco Board has made any contact with the Health Ministry to jointly appoint an Expert Committee as resolved by the Tobacco Board; and

(b) if so, what is the reaction of the Health Ministry in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) The resolution of the Tobacco Board is available with the Ministry of Health. That Ministry has been requested to take appropriate action in this regard.

Role of Statutory Bodies under Ministry of Commerce

1772. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the role of statutory bodies like Spices Board and Tobacco Board under the Ministry of Commerce;

(b) whether Government have downgraded the importance of such statutory bodies; and

(c) if so, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The Spices Board was formed for the development and export of Spices and regulation of cardamom industry including cultivation of cardamom and matters connected therewith.

The Tobacco Board basides aiming to promote the development of tobacco industry performs functions such as regulation of production, curing and marketing of virginia tobacco, ensuring fair price to Virginia growers, promoting exports and sponsoring as well as coordinating, research activities for promotion of tobacco industry.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Utilisation of Tobacco Board in Improving Tobacco Economy

1773. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps have been taken to utilise the Tobacco Board in improving the tobacco economy;

(b) whether Commerce Ministry gives adequate weightage to recommendations and resolutions of the Tobacco Board; and

(c) what are the guidelines with regard to implementing the suggestions and recommendations of Tobacco Board by Commerce Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) The Tobacco Board is charged with the responsibility of promoting the tobacco industry and of regulating production and marketing of virginia tobacco to achieve the larger objective of ensuring remunerative returns to the tobacco growers. It strives to improve the quality of virginia tobacco in India and to promote exports of all varieties of tobacco and tobacco products.

(b) and (c) Recommendations of the Tobacco Board are given due consideration before any decisions in respect of this sector are taken.

Reconstitution of Tobacco Board

1774. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Tobacco Board is to be re-constituted in the near future;

(b) when the tenure of the present board is likely to end;

(c) whether Government will nominate representatives of tobacco growers from

the upland areas of West Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh;

(d) whether any names are under consideration from that area for nomination; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) to (e) Reconstitution of the Tobacco Board is under active consideration of the Government. Under clause (e) of sub-Section 4 of Section 4 of the Tobacco Board Act, 1975, not more than ten members are to be appointed on the Board from amongst the tobacco growers, dealers, exporters, manufacturers and marketing/agricultural experts, of which the grower members shall not exceed six. Government have initiated consultations to notify members of the Tobacco Board including grower members whose terms have expired.

Recommendation of Tobacco Board

1775. SHRI S. AUSTIN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether any recommendations of Tobacco Board have been accepted by Commerce Ministry in 1994; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) Government have approved Budget estimates for 1994-95 on the recommendations of the Tobacco Board. Schemes prepared by the Board which are being implemented in 1994 include the operation of the auction system in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, schemes for better quality and yield of VFC tobacco, improving curing and storage facilities, improved grading, control and monitoring of pesticide residues, raising of nurseries, and development of new areas for FCV tobacco. Government have also approved of the Tobacco Board's proposal to construct an auction platform at Kaligiri in Andhra Pradesh.

Encouragement to Cigar Industry

1776. SHRI V. RAJAN CHELLAPPA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Tobacco Board has made any effort to encourage the traditional cigar making industry in Tamil Nadu;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a fact that Tabacco Board has not actively assisted tobacco growers involved in this sector?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) Some steps taken by Tobacco Board to help the traditional cigar making industry in Tamil Nadu include :—

1. Arranging publicity for Indian cigar tobacco by display of samples at international exhibitions;
2. Propagating Indian cigar tobacco through mailing of colour brochures to importers in various countries;
3. Despatch of cigar tobacco samples to interested importers;
4. Promotion of cigar exports to Malaysia and Indonesia during the visit of trade delegations to these countries;
5. Helping to conduct a study by Scientists of Central Tobacco Research Institute aimed at improving quality of Indian cigars and cigar tobacco.

(c) Tobacco Board is inter-alia charged with the responsibility of promoting production of Virginia Tobacco Traditional cigar making tobacco would not, therefore, fall in its purview.

Tobacco Based Cigar Industry

1777. SHRI V. RAJAN CHELLAPPA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Commerce Ministry has taken note of the tobacco-based cigar industry and its export potential in Tamil Nadu;

(b) if so, the details of steps taken to encourage this sector;

(c) whether it is a fact that Commerce Ministry has agreed to restrict the growth of cigar industry; and

(d) if so, the details of legislation being introduced with the concurrence of Commerce Ministry to restrict the growth of cigar industry and exports of cigars?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) Some steps taken to encourage the cottage sector based cigar industry in Tamil Nadu include :

(i) Abolition of excise duty on cigars;

(ii) Import of quality cigar wrappers/filler tobacco for use in export production of cigars permitted under the duty exemption scheme;

(iii) Arranging publicity in international trade exhibitions besides promotion during the foreign visits of trade delegations.